

Message Text

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21

ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1572

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 07986

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, IN, SK

SUBJECT: CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS IN SIKKIM

1. SUNDAY OBSERVER CARRIED FRONTPAGE ARTICLE JUNE 23, ALLEGING DANGER THAT SIKKIM MAY BE ANNEXED BY INDIA AND QUOTING SON OF GHOGYAL, CROWN PRINCE TENZING, WHO IS STUDENT HERE IN LONDON, AS ITS SOURCE. TENZING CLAIMED TO HAVE SPOKEN WITH HIS FATHER BY TELEPHONE' HE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING ALL ROADS TO SIKKIM ARE BLOCKED AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH OUTSIDE WORLD CONTROLLED' HE SAID HE WAS RELUCTANT TO SPECULATE ON INDIAN MOTIVES BUT WAS SEEING INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER THAT DAY TO DISCUSS THE MATTER. HE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING, "IF IT IS A CHOICE OF BEING A PROTECTORATE OF INDIA OR BEING ABSORBED, WE OBVIOUSLY WANT TO BE A PROTECTORATE". ARTICLE SPECULATES ON POSSIBILITY GHOGYAL MIGHT ABDICATE IN FAVOR OF HIS SON.

2. FCO SOUTH ASIAN DEPARTMENT HEAD CHALMERS PROFESSED LITTLE TO SAY ON THIS MATTER. HE NOTED CALCUTTA PRESS CRITICAL OF GHOGYAL AND PRAISING RESTRAINT SHOWN BY INDIAN GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP REGARDING SIKKIM. HE SAID
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INDIAN PRESS SPOKESMAN IN LONDON DESCRIBED OBSERVER

ARTICLE AS "HIGHLY MISCHIEVOUS". IN ANY CASE, 75 PERCENT OF SIKKIM POPULATION IS NEPALESE AND VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY AGAINST GHOGYAL IN APRIL'S FREE ELECTION.

3. SPECULATING ON WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, CHALMERS THOUGHT GHOGYAL LIKELY TO LEAVE AND SIKKIM TO BE RULED BY INDIAN POLITICAL OFFICER, WHO INDEED IS ALREADY RUNNING THE COUNTRY. HE NOTED THIS WOULD BE SHANKA MENON, FORMERLY IN CHARGE OF BANGLADESH OFFICE IN MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS. HE DESCRIBED AFFAIR AS "TEMPEST IN A TEACUP" AND SAID HE DID NOT SEE THE BRITISH HAVE ANY REASON TO GET INVOLVED.

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